

Minutes of Statutory Budget Meeting – Friday 25th November, 2016 at 3.00p.m.

Chair: Cllr. P. Fitzpatrick

Cllrs: Cllrs. M. Shortall, T. Breathnach, P. Dunphy, D. Fitzgerald, M. Doyle, J. Brennan, P. O' Neill, M.H. Cavanagh, P. Millea, A. McGuinness, G. Frisby, J. Malone, P. McKee, M. Noonan, B. Gardner, M. O' Neill, D. Kennedy.

Officials: C. Byrne, M Prendiville, T. Butler, M. Mullally, S. Walton, M. Delahunty, K. Hanley, D. McDonnell, B. Tyrrell, D. Shortall, A. Waldron and A.M. Walsh.

Apologies: M. Doran, P. Cleere, M.McCarthy, F. Doherty and E. Aylward

Cllr. P. Fitzpatrick opened the Statutory Budget Meeting at 3.00p.m.

Cllr. M. H. Cavanagh proposed an adjournment of 5 minutes. Cllr. A. McGuinness seconded the proposals and members agreed. The Statutory Budget Meeting resumed and Cllr. P. Fitzpatrick addressed the meeting as follows:-

“Today we meet to agree our annual budget for 2017. The function entrusted to us, to decide how the public finances are spent across our City and County, is the most important function we have as elected members. I believe that the budget presented here today is a positive step in both progressing the interests of Kilkenny and addressing, as best we can within current financial constraints, the significant challenges we face.

I would like to thank the CE, Ms Colette Byrne, and the Directors of Services for their ongoing work in their respective departments. We continue to see progress being made right across the board and this is down to your efforts and team work.

In particular, I want to pay tribute to the Councils Head of Finance Mr. Martin Prendiville for ensuring that Kilkenny County Council continues to perform extremely well in managing its finances. It's not an easy job given the challenging financial circumstances the council faces. But together with his team, Mr. Prendiville has ensured that Kilkenny has gone from strength to strength with significant investment in housing maintenance, tourism infrastructure, the arts and festivals, as well as economic development. On behalf of my colleagues and the people of Kilkenny may I thank you Martin and your team for your ongoing efforts.

Lastly, I want to thank members for participating in the budgetary process during the past several weeks. This process ensures that all issues are debated and discussed, and agreement reached. Importantly it ensures that the views of all members are taken into account and where possible reflected in the draft budget.

Colleagues, as Leas-Cathairleach can I say that whilst we will face challenges and difficulties in 2017, let us never forget that we are 24 men and women, elected to represent our communities North, South, East and West, we owe it to our communities to seek consensus and agreement where possible, overcome disagreement when it arises and ensure that the best interest of Kilkenny triumphs at all times.”

Ms. C. Byrne addressed the members and referred the members to her report included in the Draft Budget 2017 book. She stated that this is an important meeting and required important decisions in relation to investment of €70m in the County.

Ms. Byrne thanked all members for their inputs during the briefing workshops which enabled the Executive present a balanced draft budget. There have been difficult times over the last 10 years and in the 2017 Budget it is the first time that provision has been made for increase in staff numbers particularly outdoor staff.

She spoke about the National Oversight Commission and that Kilkenny has high collection rates, a low deficit which now enables the Council to raise new borrowings.

She referred to the many challenges which will arise in 2017 and in future years.

- Housing Crisis- serious challenges in finding solutions, need to develop new homes and open up land for development. A decision is awaited on the LIHAF application.
- Abbey Quarter Project- Council taking possession of the site in November. Part 8 for housing adjacent to the site will be brought before members in 2017. Work should commence on other buildings in 2017 also.
- CAS - Bridge is complete. Work on the Castlecomer Road will be completed over the next few months. Bridge and road will open toward the end of March, 2017.
- St. Mary's Museum – Proposed opening date is February 2017. Further phases in the general St. Mary's area will need to be progressed. Very significant project for the City and the County.
- Tourism- Provision in budget for increase in funding for Kilkenny Tourism. The development of Kilkenny as a tourist destination is vital. Other projects at Woodstock, Greenway, Rothe House and towns such as Inistioge and Kells need to be developed and will require investment.
- Town & Village Renewal- Funds have been approved for the 4 towns applied for.
- Arts – Kilkenny has a strong record in the Arts, the Part 8 for the new Butler Gallery will come before members early in the new year.
- Specific budget has been provided for St. Patrick's Day Parade to be a Civic event as requested by the Elected Members.
- Yulefest- Thanked committee chaired by Ann Maire Freyne. She encouraged the businesses to support it and the public to stay in Kilkenny for shopping.
- South East Action Plan for Jobs – Need to support this Regional Committee in developing new projects for Kilkenny. There are 2 significant projects being developed in Kilkenny at the moment - TSSG is working with partners on a Precision Agricultural Centre of Excellence and The Design & Craft Council is working on a proposal for a National Innovation and Design Centre.

She stated that this is a positive budget which is planning for the future and for economic development of the County. She further re-iterated that housing needs and job creation must be addressed.

Ms. Byrne thanked all the staff involved in the preparation of the budget and the staff involved in the many projects underway in the City and County.

Cllr. P. Fitzpatrick thanked the Chief Executive.

Mr. M. Prendiville addressed the meeting and referred to the draft budget issued on 16th November, 2016. He thanked the members for their input since work commenced in September 2016 on the budget. He referred to the following: - The Members decision at the September Meeting not to vary the base rate of Local Property Tax resulted in no change to the level of funding available. Draft budgetary plans had been adopted by each Municipal District with the same funding allocation as 2016.

There was additional income on commercial rates of €510k arising from additional properties on the listing. This increase was offset by the loss of income on the Utility companies amounting to €260k which were revalued in 2015.

The Harmonization Process to bring together the Annual Rate on Valuation (Multiplier) for both former rating authorities would continue in 2017. However, the proposed change was minimal with the former County Multiplier increasing to 54.7 and the former Borough multiplier reducing to 59.43. The prompt payment incentive introduced in 2016 would be maintained in 2017.

The Budget also provided for additional funding in having and provided for increased staffing across a number of service areas.

Funding provision for completed Capital projects was included at €1.3m. The DHPCLG had confirmed that compensation would be provided for 90% of the additional cost of pay restoration estimated at €370k.

He advised that discussions are ongoing with Irish Water in relation to the Central Management Charge. Mr. Prendiville referred to the decision of members to raise loan to fund Capital Projects of €13.5m and repayments have been provided for in this Budget.

He outlined that the total budget expenditure for 2017 is €70.164m and referred members to the various pages in the budget pack on the breakdown of grants, rates etc. He advised that the central management charge is €11.5m and this is re-allocated across all the service areas. He advised that he will highlight some of the major items in each service division and referred member's attention to the first service area.

1. Service Division A - Housing & Building.

Total Budget €15.961m

- Increase in housing maintenance by €440k
- Additional staff allocated to housing
- Increase in the funding for homeless
- RAS/HAP – Increased activity in this area.

On the proposal of Cllr. A. McGuinness, seconded by Cllr. M Noonan and agreed: - "That the expenditure and income in Service Division A was considered and noted".

2. Service Division B- Road Transportation and Safety

Total Budget - €17.093m

- Road grants maintained at 2016 level- allocations will be advised in 2017.
- Provision of €30k for Bus Shelters
- Provision of €30k for presentation of approach roads to Waterford
- General Municipal Allocation of €200k included in Roads for Budget purposes

On the proposal of Cllr. D. Kennedy, seconded by Cllr. P. O' Neill and agreed: - "That the expenditure and income in Service Division B was considered and noted".

3. Service Division C – Water Services.

Total Budget - €6.778m

- Discussions with Irish Water on central management charge to be finalised.

On the proposal of Cllr. T. Breathnach, seconded by Cllr. M. Shortall and agreed: - "That the expenditure and income in Service Division C was considered and noted".

4. Service Division D- Development Management

Total Budget €7.894m

- Increase in provision for Kilkenny Tourism, St. Mary's Museum, St. Patrick's Day, Paint the Town Scheme
- Provision for matching funds for Town and Village Renewal.
- Increase in provision in economic development and Local Enterprise Office
- Increase in provision for general community and enterprise expenses.

On the proposal of Cllr. G. Frisby, seconded by Cllr. P. Millea and agreed: - "That the expenditure and income in Service Division D was considered and noted".

5. Service Division E- Environmental Services

Total Budget €9.061m

- Increase provision for recycling facilities to include Ferrybank area
- Provision for residual waste collection in narrow lanes in Kilkenny City.
- Increase of provision for enforcement of Waste Regulations
- Provision included for Water Framework staff.

On the proposal of Cllr. M. Doyle, seconded by Cllr. A. McGuinness and agreed: - "That the expenditure and income in Service Division E was considered and noted".

6. Service Division F – Recreation and Amenity

Total Budget- €5.917m

- Provision for loan charges on Watershed
- Provision for amenity grants maintained.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Malone, seconded by Cllr. M. H. Cavanagh and agreed: - “That the expenditure and income in Service Division F was considered and noted”.

7. Service Division G – Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare.

Total Budget - €797,300

- Additional provision for employment of 2nd vet
- Provision for Dog Warden Service to be advertised shortly.
- Higher Education Grants to be phased out in 2017.

On the proposal of Cllr. P. O’ Neill, seconded by Cllr. D. Kennedy and agreed: - “That the expenditure and income in Service Division G was considered and noted”.

8. Service Division H- Miscellaneous Services

Total Budget - €6.659m

- Reduction in costs on operation of Motor Tax
- Small reduction in provision for refunds/irrecoverable rates
- Continuation of the Early Payment Incentive Grant for 2017

On the proposal of Cllr. A. McGuinness, seconded by Cllr. M Noonan and agreed:- “That the expenditure and income in Service Division H was considered and noted”.

Mr. Prendiville advised that the 70% of the cost in central management charge relates to Pensions and Salaries.

Cllr. P. Fitzpatrick thanked Mr. Prendiville for the detailed overview of the budget and the significant changes/provision made in the 2017 Budget. He stated that there is minimal change in the rate proposed, no change as agreed in the Local Property Tax. The core services are been maintained and welcomed the proposal to increase staff levels.

Contributions were received from Cllr. M. Doyle, M. O’ Neill, M . Shortall, D. Kennedy, J. Malone, A. McGuinness, M. Noonan, P. McKee, B. Gardner, M.H. Cavanagh, T. Breathnach and J. Brennan.

Members in general welcomed the proposed budget for 2017 and thanked the Chief Executive, Head of Finance and all staff involved in the preparation of the budget. The issues raised by members related to the following:-

- Town and Village Renewal – Welcomed the funding and hoped that it will continue for other towns/villages.
- Tourism – Welcomed increased provisions and proposals for development in Woodstock, Kells, St. Mary’s Museum, Rothe House, Status of REDZ application, ongoing support for Festivals/Arts/ St. Patrick’s Day.
- Housing Maintenance – Significant increase in allocation is welcomed
- Traveller Accommodation – funding from central government, cost of management fee for private company
- Assessment of burial grounds – need to be continued
- Proposal to service land for housing development
- Climate Change – energy rating in houses, public lights
- Welcome proposal on City Bus Service.
- No resource provided for EU Projects or Town Twinning
- Staff complimented on collection rates in these challenging times
- Funding for Kilkenny ISPCA Branch
- Important to support South East Action Plan for Jobs.

Mr. Prendiville responded to the issues raised by members and thanked the members for their input and also thanked the Finance staff for their work in preparing the Budget Pack for 2017.

It was proposed by Cllr. A. McGuinness, seconded by Cllr. M. Shortall and agreed: - “That the Refund of Rates on eligible vacant premises remains at 100% for the entire county in 2017”.

It was proposed by Cllr. D. Kennedy, seconded by Cllr. M. Shortall and agreed unanimously by all members: - “That the Budget of Kilkenny County Council for the financial year ending 31st December, 2017 as set out in Table B, be adopted as amended”.

It was proposed by Cllr. P. McKee, seconded by Cllr. G. Frisby and agreed unanimously by all members: - “That the rates set in Table A, of the Draft Budget of Kilkenny County Council for the year ending 31st December, 2017 be determined in accordance with the said Budget to the Annual Rate on Valuation to be levied for that year for the purposes set out in Table A as amended”.

Ms. C. Byrne thanked the members and all involved and welcomed an agreed budget by all members.

Cllr. P. Fitzpatrick concluded by thanking all involved.

Meeting then concluded.